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SPICES AND HONEY

Broadcast by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, Thursday, October 13, 1938, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home program, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 95 associate radio stations.

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WALLACE KADDERLY:

It's homemakers' time again. And Ruth Van Deman is here to give us the latest word from the Bureau of Home Economics. Any new discoveries over there this week, Ruth?

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

The only one I know this time is a very small one I made on my own yesterday.

KADDERLY:

What's that?

VAN DEMAN:

I found we haven't changed much in the last 446 years since Columbus sailed this way.

KADDERLY:

Whatd' you mean we haven't changed? Is this a day after Columbus Day joke you're springing on me?

VAN DEMAN:

Not at all. I happened to be reading yesterday a very fascinating report on the spice trade. Miss Mary Bynum, over in the Department of Commerce, has collected some rather startling statistics on the quantity of different spices and flavoring extracts we bring into this country during the course of a year.

KADDERLY:

You mean to imply, Ruth; we go for spices the way people did in Columbus' time?

VAN DEMAN:

I haven't any per capita figures to offer.

KADDERLY:

No, I don't imagine anybody was checking up on the export-imports of the spice trade in 1492.

VAN DEMAN:

But from all accounts pepper was the most highly sought after and popular spice in Europe then, and it still is with us today. Last year, it seems, we imported nearly 43 million pounds of pepper worth almost three million dollars. That's all kinds of pepper--red, black, and white.

(over)

KADDERLY:

(Hot and not so hot.)

VAN DEMAN:

And our total spice bill for a year figures up to around 12 million dollars.

KADDERLY:

Wholesale prices those are.

VAN DEMAN:

Wholesale and as imported, yes. [Not for the spices as we buy them in the grocery store--all thoroughly cleaned and packaged and labeled according to pure food laws.] There's a big difference about the way we use spices nowadays. The cooks four or five hundred years ago didn't have the ways we have of keeping foods fresh. So they had to put in the spices with rather a heavy hand.

KADDERLY:

And maybe tastes were more robustious then. Those old buccaneers didn't have exactly dainty appetites.

VAN DEMAN:

You can tell that by the old recipes. Anyway, we scatter our spices with a lighter touch and in more places. I had a French dressing the other day with a dash of curry powder in it on a cabbage salad.

KADDERLY:

Sounds -- all right.

VAN DEMAN:

It was. And just a grating or two of nutmeg in a cream chicken soup gives it real distinction. And a whole clove dropped into a cup of hot tea or hot bouillon makes it smell good and taste better. It's fun I think to experiment with spices.

KADDERLY:

The age of discovery isn't over yet.

VAN DEMAN:

Certainly not. That's why the chefs are always getting new dishes named for them.

Of course it's the aromatic oil in spices that gives them their flavor. That's why they need to be kept in tight boxes with the covers on, and not too close to the stove. Heat drives off these essential oils. They disappear into thin air. - - - Well, so much for spices.

KADDERLY:

Not quite. I'd like to know if spices are foods.

VAN DEMAN:

You mean do they have food value?

KADDERLY:

Yes.

VAN DEMAN:

So far as I know the only one that has any claim to food value is the red chili pepper--used so much in Mexican cookery. The vitamin experts found that it's rich in vitamin A. And down there in Mexico where butter and cream and some of the other vitamin A foods are rather scarce, that's probably how the people manage to get some of the vitamin A they need.

KADDERLY:

But you wouldn't recommend that for us.

VAN DEMAN:

Not until somebody invents a fireproof lining for the throat. The way we ordinarily use spices, all they do for us is to stimulate the flow of gastric juices in the stomach in a gentle kind of way, and maybe speed up digestion a little bit.

KADDERLY:

Thank you. I'm glad to get straight on that.

VAN DEMAN:

Now for just a word or two about honey. Somebody wrote me the other day and asked how to use honey in making cake. Her idea was to use honey in place of sugar.

KADDERLY:

No can do, can you?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes. Elizabeth Whiteman made some very nice honey cakes in our experimental kitchen. Some with half sugar and half honey. Some with all honey, for the sweetening. You can take a standard cake recipe and adjust it for either, but you have to watch of course whether the honey is thick or thin.

KADDERLY:

Suppose it's just medium thick.

VAN DEMAN:

That simplifies things a little. If you want all honey, just use half the quantity of milk or other liquid called for in the regular recipe. The liquid in the honey is enough. And you just mix the batter up in the usual way.

KADDERLY:

That sounds very simple, as you say it, Ruth. But if I were that lady I'd want printed directions right on the kitchen cabinet in front of me.

VAN DEMAN:

I should myself. I sent her the honey leaflet. It has the exact ingredients for white honey cake and chocolate honey cake all figured out to the last teaspoon.

KADDERLY:

Good.

VAN DEMAN:

And I underscored the line about baking honey cakes and cookies in a more moderate oven than you do those made with sugar. Honey cake browns more quickly. And it loses some of that aromatic honey flavor if the oven's too hot.

KADDERLY:

Like the spices stored in a warm place.

There are several things about using honey I'd like to ask you too. But I guess we'll have to let them go till some other day.

VAN DEMAN:

If it's about how much honey to eat, you know what Solomon said: "Eat as much as is sufficient for thee--it is sweet to the taste and health to the bones."

KADDERLY:

The modern dietitians agree with that?

VAN DEMAN:

No, that's poetry, not science.

KADDERLY:

Thank you, Ruth, for the science and poetry you've brought us. We'll be expecting you again next Thursday. (Ad lib reference to honey leaflet)

E. J. (MIKE) ROWELL:

Isn't anybody here going to mention hot gingerbread? Or apple pie with cinnamon?

VAN DEMAN:

We knew you would, Mr. Rowell, just as soon as you got to the microphone.

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